

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1 – 39. (cancelled)

40. (new) A process for disrupting a filter cake in an underground formation, which process comprises:

- (a) incorporating into a drilling fluid a solid polymer capable of being converted by hydrolysis into one or more organic acids;
- (b) using the drilling fluid to drill a wellbore into the underground formation such that the solid polymer in the drilling fluid contributes to the formation of a filter cake; and
- (c) allowing the solid polymer to hydrolyse in the presence of water and to disrupt the integrity of the filter cake.

41. (new) A process according to claim 40 wherein the solid polymer is a polyester.

42. (new) A process according to claim 40 wherein the solid polymer is an aliphatic polyester.

43. (new) A process according to claim 40 wherein the solid polymer is a polymer which comprises one or more of lactic acid, lactide, glycolic acid, glycolide, caprolactone and (optionally) other hydroxy, carboxylic acid or hydroxy-carboxylic acid compounds which may condense with lactic acid, lactide, glycolic acid, glycolide or caprolactone.

44. (new) A process according to claim 40 wherein the solid polymer is a polymer which produces one or more organic acids on hydrolysis.

45. (new) A process according to claim 40 wherein the solid polymer is a polymer which produces lactic acid or glycolic acid on hydrolysis.

46. (new) A process according to claim 40 wherein the solid polymer is in the form of a sphere, cylinder, cuboid, fibre, powder or bead, or other configuration.
47. (new) A process according to claim 40 wherein the acid produced by hydrolysis of the solid polymer dissolves acid soluble material present in the filter cake or adjacent formation.
48. (new) A process according to claim 40 wherein the drilling fluid comprises the solid polymer in an amount of from 1 to 25% v/v.
49. (new) A process according to claim 40 wherein the drilling fluid further comprises a polymer breaker or the solid polymer further comprises a polymer breaker.
50. (new) A process according to claim 40 wherein the process further comprises displacing the drilling fluid with a fluid comprising a polymer breaker.
51. (new) A process according to claim 49 wherein the polymer breaker is a hydrolase enzyme.
52. (new) A process according to claim 49 wherein the polymer breaker is a polysaccharide hydrolysing enzyme.
53. (new) A process according to claim 49 wherein the polymer breaker is an enzyme which can hydrolyse starch, xanthan, cellulose, guar, scleroglucan or succinoglycan or a derivative of any one of these polymers.
54. (new) A process according to claim 49 wherein the polymer breaker is an oxidant.

55. (new) A process according to claim 54 wherein the polymer breaker is an oxidant selected from persulphate, hypochlorite, peroxide, perborate, percarbonate, perphosphate, persilicate, metal cation and hydrogen peroxide adduct.

56. (new) A process according to claim 49 wherein the polymer breaker is in the form of a delayed release preparation.

57. (new) A process according to claim 49 wherein the or each polymer breaker is incorporated into the solid polymer by (a) encapsulation, to allow its or their controlled release coincident with or after acid production; or (b) dissolution or dispersion, to allow its or their controlled release coincident with acid production.

58. (new) A process according to claim 40 wherein the solid polymer or drilling fluid and consequent filter cake further comprises calcium peroxide and wherein acid produced by hydrolysis of the solid polymer leads to the generation of hydrogen peroxide.

59. (new) A process according to claim 40 wherein the solid polymer, drilling fluid or solids free fluid further comprises ammonium bifluoride and wherein acid produced by hydrolysis of the solid polymer leads to the generation of hydrogen fluoride.

60. (new) A process according to claim 40 wherein the drilling fluid further comprises calcium sulphate as a bridging agent.

61. (new) A process according to claim 49 wherein the polymer breaker is present in an amount sufficient to further disrupt the integrity of the filter cake.

62. (new) A process according to claim 40 wherein the underground formation contains hydrocarbon or water and wherein the process further comprises recovering a hydrocarbon or water from the treated formation.

63. (new) A process according to claim 40 wherein the solid polymer further comprises one or more other materials incorporated into the solid polymer by dissolution dispersion or encapsulation.

64. (new) A process according to Claim 63 wherein the one or more other materials are selected from polymer breakers, specific gravity adjusting materials, calcium peroxide and ammonium bifluoride.

65. (new) A drilling fluid suitable for drilling into an underground formation which contains as a bridging agent one or more solid polymers capable of being converted by hydrolysis into one or more organic acids.

66. (new) A drilling fluid according to claim 65 wherein the solid polymer is a polyester.

67. (new) A drilling fluid according to claim 65 wherein the or each solid polymer is as defined.

68. (new) A drilling fluid according to claim 65 wherein the solid polymer hydrolyses in the presence of water and disrupts a filter cake incorporating the solid polymer.

69. (new) A drilling fluid according to claim 68 wherein acid produced by hydrolysis of the solid polymer further disrupts a filter cake by reacting with acid soluble material present in the filter cake or adjacent formation.